

North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: August 14, 2003

The Phase II Independent Scientific Review Panel Report on Sediment Impairment and Effects on Beneficial Uses of the Elk River and Stitz, Bear, Jordan and Freshwater Creeks has been Submitted to the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board

Today the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (Regional Board) announced the availability of the "Phase II Report: Independent Scientific Review Panel on Sediment Impairment and Effects on Beneficial Uses of the Elk River and Stitz, Bear, Jordan and Freshwater Creeks." Prepared by a panel of nationally renowned scientists, the report examines the Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) and associated timber harvesting review processes on Pacific Lumber Company lands and their effectiveness in protecting the rivers and streams in five timbered watersheds.

The independent panel was formed in an effort by the Regional Board to develop impartial and sound recommendations related to mitigating the effects of timber harvest on water quality.

Overall, the Independent Scientific Review Panel (Panel) did not find an adequate scientific basis for reliance on the HCP and the Sustained Yield Plan for the protection and restoration of water quality in the five watersheds. The Panel's report concludes that these instruments are missing several critical elements necessary to assure protection and restoration of water quality. The Panel found that science-based information on watershed conditions and the water quality impacts of timber-related operations is missing at key stages in the decision and regulatory processes. Finally, the Panel found no scientific basis for the assumption that water quality impacts from logging can be fully mitigated, an assumption of critical importance to the current regulatory practice.

Members of the Panel will present key findings from their report at a public workshop to be held at the Regional Board's office at 1:00 p.m. on August 26, 2003. The purpose of the workshop is to allow the Regional Board an opportunity to interact with the Panel members and ask questions relative to the Panel's deliberations and report. After the workshop on the 26th, the Regional Board and staff will discuss the report with stakeholders prior to developing policy recommendations.

Any questions relative to convening the Panel, the contents of the report, or of the structure of the workshop should be directed to Dr. Robert Twiss or Dr. Scott McCreary. Dr. Twiss can be reached at (530) 694-2706 until Friday evening and at (415) 454-5610 thereafter. Dr. McCreary can be reached at CONCUR, INC., (510) 649-8008, or at 1820 Second Street, Berkeley, California 94710. Any general questions, contact Frank Reichmuth, Assistant Executive Officer- North Coast Regional Water Board, at (707) 576-2694, or 5550 Skylane Blvd, Santa Rosa CA, 95403

The report can be obtained from the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board at 5550 Skylane Blvd, Santa Rosa CA, 95403 or from the Regional Board's website at http://www.swrcb.ca.gov/rwqcb1/agenda/08_2003/08_2003.html under the August 2003 heading.